

So I walk along this street (I'm sure it has  
a name) I walk alone along this street  
and watch a million individuals  
fall from the sky and turn my jacket white.

## MANIFESTO

I want a girlfriend.  
I don't want a living arrangement domestic partner  
significant other insignificant other male or female  
lover  
I want a sweetheart,  
want someone to give me a scarf or necklace to hang from  
my rear view mirror,  
want whether we're doing it (or not) to echo in whispers  
off locker room walls.  
I want to take her to that Mexican stand in the parking  
lot off Sixth Avenue  
where the city has roped off the streets and ripped up  
the sidewalks for reconstruction  
for tacos de lengua burritos de tripa lemon wedges  
radishes,  
I want to watch a fallen streetlamp cast our shadow on a  
billboard  
and to know in my heart as her skirt moves with the breeze  
we're not really that big.  
I want to take her to the races and spend more on ice  
cream than on the horses;  
I want to handicap better than she does, but I want both  
of us to be wrong,  
and I want to bet  
a little money  
no more than I can afford,  
but to make my wager exciting  
I want to place it  
all on one horse.

— David Sklar

Marquette MI

## THREE ROOMS

On  
Saturday  
I drive to  
the Denton Road  
Liquor Store  
for two forty-ounce  
bottles of Budweiser.  
On my way out, I drive



through the alley behind  
the store.  
There is a small  
apartment building to one side  
of the alley. I see a woman  
open the door of her apartment,  
lean out, and begin beating  
a small pink bathroom rug against  
the asbestos shingle wall of the  
old and disrepaired  
apartment building.  
The woman is about 25,  
dark-haired, and dressed  
in a red bathrobe.  
I drive slowly through the  
alley because there are potholes  
there filled with busted concrete  
and water. I look at the woman,  
and I can see around her,  
inside the small one-room apartment  
where a b/w television glows.  
I suddenly remember  
the three-room shack  
where I had lived with  
a half-crazy woman, and how  
we had fought and fucked and drank  
on two hundred dollars a month.  
I remember how cramped  
and ugly those three rooms were,  
how we rubbed up against  
each other and how  
the friction and closeness  
of the three rooms worked  
on us like a disease.  
Now it's nearly  
two decades later  
and I live in five rooms  
with a woman who is not  
half-crazy.  
I remain poor,  
though the problems  
are mostly outside of us,  
the problems come from  
economics and the unbroken  
burden of change.  
I have learned about life  
from the abrasion  
of experience  
and time. Five rooms  
and a good woman make all  
the difference in the world.  
I drive past  
the old apartment building,



turn on Denton Road,  
and drive down  
to Geddes.  
I'm thirsty  
and I want to  
taste the  
beer.

#### SHELIA'S FRIENDS

In  
grade school,  
Shelia had  
imaginary friends.  
She would talk  
to them on the playground.  
This is Horace the Horse,  
she'd say, and this  
is Bob the Bear.  
I'd stand there  
looking at nothing.  
Shelia was nice,  
she didn't make fun of me  
because I was a slow reader,  
so I would hang out  
with her on the playground.  
This is Sam the Snake,  
and over there's Dave the Dragon.  
Hello, I'd say to the air.  
One day  
two fifth graders came over  
to where Shelia and I were talking  
to her imaginary friends,  
and the two fifth graders began  
calling Shelia names, saying  
she was crazy.  
Shelia began to cry,  
and then she ran back in the school.  
I was left out there  
with the two fifth graders.  
What are you going to do?  
they asked me,  
but before I could do anything,  
before I could turn and get away,  
the larger of the two hit me  
in the face. I put up my hands,  
covered my face,  
and tried very hard  
not to cry.  
If they saw you cry,  
they never left you alone,